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Fall 10-1-1999

Volume 13, Number 01

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Recommended Citation
Forrester, Don Editor, "Volume 13, Number 01" (1999). *Reaching Through Teaching*. Book 33.
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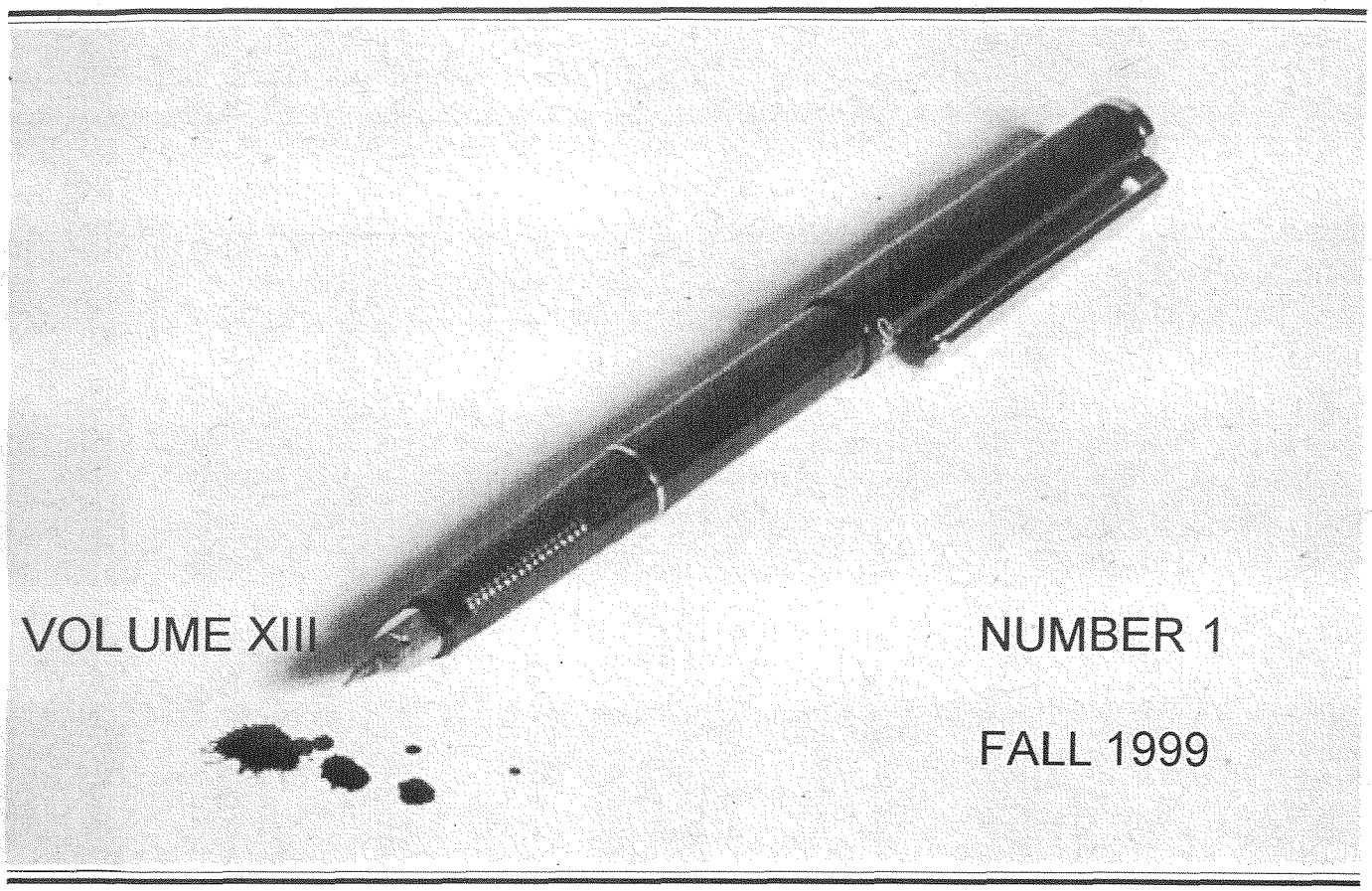
REACHING THROUGH TEACHING

A Journal of the Practice and Philosophy of College Teaching



VOLUME XIII NUMBER 1

FALL 1999

THE CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

BAGWELL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY
University System of Georgia

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Reaching Through Teaching

Volume 13, Number 1, Fall 1999

Contributions are solicited from faculty at all colleges and universities. Please submit articles to the Cente for Excellence in Teaching and Learning on a 3.5" disk in Microsoft Word, or via e-mail (dforrest@alltel.net) A hard copy is also helpful. Preferred length of articles is 750-1,800 words. The deadline for the next issue is March 1, 2000. We reserve the right to edit articles in keeping with our editorial practices. Footnote ore references, if used, should be in an acceptable academic format. We rarely accept previously published articles, and then only if written permission from the publisher accompanies the submission. Contact the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Kennesaw State University, 1000 Chastain Road, Kennesaw GA 30144-5591. Phone 770-423-6117.

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Hand in Glove: *Reaching Through Teaching* and the Georgia Conference on College and University Teaching

Donald W. Forrester, Editor

Thirteen years ago the first issue of *Reaching Through Teaching* was published by Kennesaw State's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. It was a twelve-page publication intended as a vehicle for Kennesaw State faculty to share teaching ideas with one another. Few off-campus colleagues ever saw a copy. Now professors from all over the University System of Georgia submit their teaching articles for dissemination throughout the state and, increasingly, the nation.

In the meantime, seven years ago, the Georgia Conference on College and University Teaching launched its inaugural meeting. It was enthusiastically supported by colleagues from all sectors of the University System from two-year institutions through research universities. Statewide cooperation has caused the conference to continue to grow in size and quality.

It seemed quite natural when, a few years ago, under the leadership of former CETL director, Dr. Lana Wachniak, *Reaching Through Teaching* began publishing articles based upon Teaching Conference presentations. This practice has become a symbiotic relationship that raises and broadens the influence of *Reaching Through Teaching* and at the same time promotes interest in the conference.

The tradition will continue when, on February 3-4, 2000, the seventh annual conference will meet. This year, for the first time, it will be held in Kennesaw State University's spacious new Continuing Education Center, just across I-75 from the main campus. Spacious conference rooms, state-of-the-art technology and plenty of close, free parking will make this a much easier and pleasant event to attend. The spring issue of *Reaching through Teaching* is expected to reflect the excellence of the Conference.

To join us, make your reservations by calling KSU Continuing Education at 770-423-6765 or toll free 1-800-869-1151. We look forward to seeing you.

Reaching Through Teaching Welcomes New Staff

This year, Dr. Gail Walker, Associate Professor of English at Kennesaw State University, joins us as Assistant Editor. Gail arrived at Kennesaw in 1976 and has since taught a variety of English courses, including many, many writing courses. She brings precisely the kind of experience needed by this publication. We look forward to working with her.

We also welcome Ms. Brenda Curtis, our new Secretary to the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. She is also a secretary in the Dean's Office of the Bagwell College of Education. Before coming to her present position, she was a secretary in KSU's Student Life Center. Brenda has extensive background in several word processing programs and in using PageMaker. She is a welcome addition to our staff.

A Student-Centered Philosophy for Revising Writing Assignments

Martha F. Bowden, Assistant Professor of English,
Margaret B. Walters, Assistant Professor of English,
M. Todd Harper, Assistant Professor of English,
Carol P. Harrell, Assistant Professor of English,
Susan M. Hunter, Professor of English,
Kennesaw State University

As teachers of a range of courses in the Kennesaw State University English department, we share a philosophy of negotiable, collaborative assignment shaping in our classroom communities. In the essays that follow, we share stories of assignments that we regularly use but continually reshape in response to varying classroom communities and student interpretations. Because we share a wish to be surprised and challenged by student work, our "regular" assignments provide guidance within a framework that encourages risk-taking. Yet we all recognize that this open-endedness may cause some students to be unsure about expectations (in practical terms, how to succeed with the assignment). So another key aspect of our philosophy involves encouraging classroom talk where students and teacher negotiate the meaning and the process of particular writing tasks within the context of the classroom community and instructional goals. The teaching contexts represented in the essays that follow include:

- A freshman composition course for joint-enrollment honors high school students
- A freshman composition course for new and returning undergraduates
- An upper-level course for students undertaking professional writing in the disciplines
- An upper-level methods course for pre-service middle school and high school teachers
- A graduate course for professional writing students

Reenvisioning an Assignment for the Joint Enrollment Classroom

Martha F. Bowden

In my first composition class, the final writing assignment was a research paper. Each student was to investigate three events that happened in the year in which he or she was born. The assignment has a number of attractive qualities: it encourages the use of a variety of sources, and requires some ingenuity, especially at the outset. Students are encouraged to look at newspapers and other periodicals; the library catalogue does not automatically unfold a wealth of information until the student has progressed far enough to have some topics to look up. Students also learn some important things about events in the world around them, and the way those events have shaped them, even though they have no memory of them. Finally, it has the great virtue of allowing general conversation about research approaches and credibility of sources, while practically guaranteeing that no two students would write the same essay. The guarantee was especially sound at Kennesaw State College, as it then was, with our hefty enrollment of so-called nontraditional students. Or so I thought.

In the ensuing years, many things have changed in my composition syllabus. In fact, it is probably safe to say that *everything* has changed: my increasing focus on argument has resulted in new textbooks, individual writing assignments, final assessment, use of journals and so on. The one element that has not changed is that last writing assignment. It continues to be a good way to approach research, a forum that engages the students' interest, and provides a nice variety of final products. I think the epitome of the assignment's success came the quarter I had a fifty year spread in the classroom-a joint-enrolled student, just seventeen, and a sixty-seven-year-old grandmother, who, having put two sons through law school, had decided it was her turn.

The assignment itself had undergone some refinement. Requiring the writers to argue for a particular world view using these events for support resulted in the piece having a kind of unity, rather than being three mini-essays. I also, in response to what my students were doing, expanded the definition of "event" to include culturally important and interesting phenomena: book publication, sports events, medical and legal milestones. I really did get tired of Watergate, and a thoughtful person can make perceptive comments about a society based on its Academy Award decisions.

Thus I had a tidy, engaging, interesting topic which encouraged both research and reflection, which could develop beyond a report, which allowed for argument, and which varied from student to student as each took his or her birth year and ran with it. And then one day I walked into my first class full of joint enrollment honors students and found myself faced with over twenty students whose age range ran the gamut from seventeen to eighteen.

Kennesaw has had a Joint-Enrolled Twelfth Grade, or JET student program for some time, which is how I managed to have a seventeen-year-old in the class I mentioned above. But several years ago, when the university began an honors program for its regularly

enrolled students, it developed at the same time a related offering for the joint enrollment student, including special sections of some classes, and closer articulation with the public schools to ensure that the courses the students take with us meet their requirements for high school graduation. I have taught freshman composition in the honors program since its inception.

So here I was, with twenty-plus students and no variety of ages. Because part of the reason for the assignment was an exercise in student diversity, I had to think of some way of expanding the topic. I did not want to drop it altogether because it still has a lot to say to students of any age. For example, today's high school seniors and college freshman have lived all their lives with the reality of AIDS; it is therefore instructive for them to learn that the HIV virus was identified the year they were born, for here is an event which has shaped their world and the way they live in it. They are very aware of, and influenced by popular culture-perhaps more so than some of my older students who, having spent a number of years in the work force, or in the services, or raising children, or some combination of all three, have become removed from and immune to the enchantments of MTV. Thus, investigating how that culture grew out of influences brewing at the time of their birth is also instructive. What is more, they are more likely to have parents whom they can interview, which provides an opportunity to evaluate sources. I tell them to treat their interviews as a preliminary source, one that gives them both a place to start investigating large issues and a way of personalizing their essays. When their parents' memories prove hazy or inaccurate, we can talk about a couple of things-both the potential inaccuracies of oral histories, and the effect of sleep deprivation on memory function. One of the high school students, upon learning that while his mother was in labor his parents watched two episodes of MASH, found the scripts of those episodes on the internet and used them very provocatively in his essay. So I wanted to keep the assignment, but I didn't want twenty-three essays about 1979. For that reason, I have expanded the reaches of the topic to the first five years of their life— the preschool years, the ones that seem to take longest at the time, and whose events are most thoroughly forgotten.

There are other ways of developing diversity as well. Given the demographics of the student base- most, although certainly not all, of our students come from relatively affluent, although not necessarily stable homes, and most are still living in the counties in which they were born-I have very few international students; I don't even have very many who were born in other states! But I encourage the few I have to pull the events of their original culture into their essays, to confuse the world view, to suggest that while we are all born into the same world, our perspectives on the nature of that place are not necessarily the same. One of my students, whose family is Vietnamese, explained that he was born in Hong Kong because that was as far as his mother got before she went into labor. My comfortable, middle class students need to hear those stories. And I will take all these variations on the assignment into my regularly enrolled classes from now on, because, as those students discovered, major trends do not always respect the calendar year, and where you were born makes a difference.

Not only does this assignment have something to say to all students, I believe it has something special for the Joint Enrolled. They are poised to move into the world, away from their parents and their accustomed paths of friendships. We began the semester describing discourse communities, but of course for them, those communities are in flux and are about to change, in some cases radically. The old sites of communication- their jobs, their schools, their sports activities-will disappear in the next few months, and their roles in those which remain, like their families and close friendships, will not be the same. One young woman has already described her feelings of disjunction, of not "belonging" with her high school friends. Nonetheless, the forces they will reveal to have been at work eighteen years ago-the medical discoveries, the legal decisions, the political trends, the technological advancements- will continue to affect their lives, particularly as they begin to move about that world as adults. Consider the children born in 1918: by the time they were eighteen, the events of their birth year and the years immediately following it meant that they graduated from high school in a world steeped in depression and headed for a war in which they would be frontline participants. On the other hand, since their birth, scientists had discovered penicillin and insulin, both of which made their survival to the age of eighteen more certain. The existence of antibiotics would provide a shield against infection, one of the greatest contributors to war casualties in the past. But nothing could provide a shield against atomic warfare, under whose shadow the children of those eighteen-year-olds would grow up. By the time my students have finished their essays, they will be aware of some of the forces that will affect the rest of their lives because, while the first writing assignment turns them inward, the last one turns them out. And out is where they are going to have to go, very soon.

Accommodating Student Voice in Nonfiction Writing: An Ethnography Assignment in English 1101

Margaret B. Walters

The ethnography assignment that I use in my English 1101, Composition I, class at Kennesaw State University is an adaptation of the one described by James Thomas Zebroski, in Chapter Two, "Using Ethnographic Writing to Construct Classroom Knowledge," of his 1994 book, *Thinking Through Theory: Vygotskian Perspectives on the Teaching of Writing*.[1] This assignment gives students the opportunity to closely study a community and to say something important about that community; it also supports the students' realization that they can set up a problem, analyze and resolve it, and then formulate ideas about what a community is and write about it. Thus, the ethnography reinforces the students' sense of self as part of a wider community, but more than that, shows students that writing can be alive and interesting and that they have lots of things to say.

Laying the groundwork for a research paper that is published for other members of the class, this assignment asks students to make frequent visits to a site of their choice (in order to study a group of people engaged in some activity), and to analyze the data they collect through observations, field notes, and interviews. The research consists of (1) observing people and their activities at the site, as well as the site environment itself; (2) making field notes in a double-entry notebook (on one side of the page describing people, their behaviors-gestures, conversation, and actions; the site environment-its physical and social and cultural surroundings, or, in other words, the ambiance of the site (its atmosphere); on the other side of the page, students are asked to describe their own feelings about the site and what they observe taking place there, as well as their own mood at the time of the site visit; and (3) interviewing people who participate in activities at the site of study.

One of the things I want to happen by using this assignment is to give students the freedom to choose their site of study and to write about what interests them because the most vivid and cohesive writing among first-year composition students seems to derive from writing about their own experiences. The modifications I have made to the assignment each time I've taught it are based on what I and my students have learned about what happens in field research and when students write about sites that create consternation in the readers of their reports-their peers. Learning to accommodate student voice, to make room for their choices to find expression, especially when their subject matter explores controversial or surprising topics, requires that students, as part of the class writing community, and I, as the teacher, take a liberal, freedom-of-expression approach. It also means that I must be careful not to dampen their enthusiasm or slight the seriousness with which they approach the task.

What surprised me about the first set of essays was the diversity of student ethnographies, which ran the gamut from the ultra-conservative (a "singles" Sunday school class in an evangelical church) to the ultra-liberal (the exotic dancers in a nightclub). The student who chose the latter field site was one of the dancers at the club. Interestingly, she refused to share her initial draft with her writing group, asking me instead to evaluate her essay in class. As I had only been aware that she had chosen to write about her place of work but not what her occupation was, the draft was quite surprising, both in its subject matter and in its frank and less than objective treatment of her site. For instance, in this first draft, she wrote about her sexual orientation. Though the greater part of her study dealt with her field observations of the women who danced at the club and their camaraderie and interactions with customers, her self-revelations seemed out of place. Were they meant to shock, since the essays were to be published? And did such revelations belong in an ethnography? I told her that while an ethnography often describes the observer's point of view and can express feelings about the site, she needed to consider how relevant the personal information was to the study of the site and whether she wanted to reveal herself in this way to the class as a whole. However, I stopped short of suggesting that she delete the personal information. If students are to write about a site of their choice, they shouldn't be constrained by the teacher and other students' potential shock at what takes place at the site. Her final draft, however, revealed that she chose to take out the personal references, yet left in the observations about the sexual orientation of other dancers at the club. The final draft was a much more objective study in tone, yet still contained personal elements, such as her interest in making a great deal of money and her love of dressing up and dancing. Needless to say, given the conservative bent of many of the students in the class, her essay excited a lot of talk, and led to interesting comments in the students' final reflective essays, which analyzed the ethnographies of the class as a whole. However, the reflective essays were treated confidentially, which proved to be a good thing, given the controversial nature of some of the studies. For example, some students expressed their shock at her occupation and distress that she was engaged in such activity-a few even offered prayers that she would find Jesus and give up this line of work. Interestingly and fortunately, in class discussions of the ethnographies in general, students were respectful and polite and did not express the horror

and shock they revealed in their reflective essays, which were only seen by my eyes.

At this point, I began to question whether I should use this assignment again, given the ethical and rhetorical challenges that resulted. Yet, I also wondered if it might be a natural inclination for some students to take the opportunity of this assignment to advance their own views of how best to live one's life or to "shock" the readers, both teacher and classmates, with the startling details of their particular site. Some of the studies might have been informed by a desire to shock-such as the exotic dancer's study and another student's study of his friends' apartment-the site of a local "Animal House" culture. However, for the most part, the studies seriously explored what community means and how people in these communities act and interact. Two of the best studies in this regard were the study of a local night club featuring underground music (alternative and punk), ravers, mosh pits, and wave dancing; and the study of a band of musicians, in which a student wrote tellingly of the dynamics of individual personalities trying to form a cohesive whole musically while being torn apart by the tensions resulting from the liaisons that kept forming and reforming among various members of the group.

As this assignment has evolved, I have changed the reflective essay so they wouldn't take the opportunity to "judge" others' life-styles, especially in our diverse classrooms. Instead, the essay asks students to reflect on how they see themselves as observers / writers and to consider what their motives are in selecting the site, as well as choosing what to write about once they have collected their field notes and interviews. This change is aimed at helping students see their own, often hidden, biases that might show up in their reports and what this might say about their ethos as writers. So far, it has led to greater insight for some students.

If students are to become full-fledged writers in their academic careers, then they need to learn how to establish their own credibility in the eyes of their readers. The strengths of this assignment may lie in honoring students' voices and choices. Only when we sanction their right to choose freely and write freely can they grow as writers and learn the pleasures of expressing what is meaningful to them. And the self-confidence that I have seen this assignment engender can only be a bonus as they continue their writing in other courses.

Discovering the Structure of Professional Writing: When Revising an Assignment Entails Revising the Course

M. Todd Harper

Often, when we revise an assignment, we find ourselves revising the assignment sequence of the course. After asking students to propose and research the writing in their field of study for a course in Professional Writing in the Disciplines, I discovered that students were failing to connect it with other assignments in the course. In order to make the connections more visible, I moved the assignment to earlier in the semester (as opposed to the end as it had been the previous semester) and followed it with the types of writing that they had discovered in their research. In this essay, I will discuss how the re-sequencing of one assignment changed the nature of the rest.

At Kennesaw State University, Professional Writing in the Disciplines combines technical and business writing with writing in the disciplines. Students practice the various genres of their field of study, while also reflecting upon the rhetorical situation and the process of their writing. For example, a student might document computer instructions for a layperson. As the student produces her text, she might also reflect upon how the text is shaped by its audience.

Several factors have influenced my assignment sequence for the course, most notably the variety of students who take the course. Originally, the course was designed to read "Professional Writing in the Disciplines: (the name of a particular discipline or field of study). For example, the pilot course was entitled "Professional Writing in the Disciplines: Computer Science and Information Systems Management." Joe Bocchi, the originator of this course, piloted it with a series of assignments designed especially for CS and IS majors, reflecting the technical nature of their fields. However, because of the interest in the course by other majors and the limited resources to teach the course, the specific disciplinary identification was dropped and the course was opened to all students who had completed their general education writing requirements.

When I inherited the course the following semester, I had to design assignments that would benefit all of my students, not just one group. I designed an assignment sequence with four major assignments: a report analyzing a journal in their field, a revision of a document, a proposal, and a research study. The proposal and the research study were based on the same assignment module of interviewing a professional about the writing he/she does. The other two assignments were freestanding and, thus, were perceived by the students as unrelated to the proposal or report.

Initially, the student response to the assignment sequence, in particular the proposal and report, was mixed. For my computer science and information system's management students, the assignment module was generally successful. To their surprise, they discovered that professionals within their field write extensively using a wide range of genres from research reports and fiscal studies to business letters and memos.

Many previously assumed that their jobs would simply involve technical support. These students have made important connections between the technical and business aspects of their jobs through the writing that they have discovered.

For my non-CS and IS majors, most notably my liberal arts majors, the response to the assignment module was more negative. All of these students-with the exception of one-chose to interview a faculty member. In terms of a success, these students realized that academics do more than write journal articles and books. Like their CS/IS counterparts, they too saw that professionals within their field write reports, letters, and memos, not to mention all of the writing apparatus surrounding teaching. However, in choosing an academic, these students became trapped in thinking that the academy was the only logical outcome of their degree. This was especially problematic since none of these students intended to go into academia.

Yet, all of the students complained about the relationship between the proposal and the report with the journal analysis and document revision. First, they argued that their research demonstrated that few professionals rigorously read academic journals. Instead, these professionals usually read trade magazines. (The exception, of course, being the academics.) Second, the students noted that I had not assigned more of the business or technical documents that they encountered in their findings. Many were especially surprised by the amount of business writing that they would have to do. Third, the students complained that the proposal and report had more to do with their writing than the genres that they would produce in the field.

In revising the proposal and report assignment module, I have changed the entire assignment sequence of the course. First, I have made the proposal and report into the centerpiece of the class. The proposal and report have been placed in the first half of the semester and guide the assignments that follow. Second, I have assigned business and technical documents that my students had discovered in their results. Most notably, students now practice writing resumes, letters, memos, technical definitions, documentation, and instructions. Third, I have maintained the focus of the proposal and report on the writing of a professional. However, I have begun to stress how this writing is similar to the proposals and reports that they will do in their field.

In choosing this course of action, I have changed the course while trying to meet my students' expectations. As students practice the genres of their field-a proposal, research study, memos, letters, instructions-they also reflect upon issues in writing. Although this sounds like a logical revision, it has not been without its difficulties. Most notably, it still clashes with the expectations of my CS/IS student. First, these students are required to take Professional Writing and, therefore, feel that it should meet their specific needs. Currently, they feel the course is defined too broadly. As of now, I continue to negotiate their differences, and, I imagine, I will continue to revise this course as long as I teach it.

From Academic to Professional Writing
Carol P. Harrell

By the time English education students take the methods course in the semester before student teaching, the focus of writing instruction makes a transition from purely academic to the beginnings of professional writing. Secondary English Methods, a seven-hour class, meets three hours a day, three days per week; in addition, the students spend one morning each week observing in a variety of secondary school settings. This pattern continues for eleven weeks, and then the students go to a secondary school and participate in an extended field experience. During this four-week experience, each student is assigned to a teacher and spends three hours a day observing and teaching. These students are at the point in their academic career when they are ready to consider the development of their professional literacy.

Toward that end, the students have several writing assignments in the eleven-week course segment, the time they are on campus. One assignment that is particularly important as they begin to think about writing as a professional is the explanatory paper they do in conjunction with a unit plan they develop. The first requirement is a unit plan, a typical day-by-day plan they would follow if teaching in a high school classroom. Included in that unit are elements of instruction in all of the language arts, which include reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. The second part of the assignment is a paper devoted to a theoretical explanation of why the pedagogical strategies used in the unit were chosen. In effect, these pre-service teachers define and defend their practice by supporting their beliefs about good instruction with research on the teaching of English.

In the past, the unit plan and theoretical defense have been done the Friday before the students go into the schools. Herein lies the problem; these pre-service teachers define and defend their practice *outside* the real-world experience. The course offers the practical experience, but the assignment designed to defend pedagogical strategies occurred before the students learned what real teachers do in real classrooms. In defense of the assignment, I believe pre-service teachers need to know how to prepare units before they go into the schools to teach, so doing the first part of the assignment (the unit plan) before the teaching component

makes sense. The second part of the assignment is problematic; although I know that my intentions to have students complete all of their assignments prior to the demanding field experience are good, asking students to defend teaching strategies before trying them out became an issue in this writing assignment.

The four-week teaching experience comes when students are out in the field at the end of the term, so they are not provided an easy avenue in which to give me feedback. Occasionally, however, students have come by my office after the semester is over and suggested that the theoretical explanation and defense might be a more substantive piece of writing if it followed the field experience. These writers are aware that after they have taught they know more about effective practice because they've experienced the classroom, and that knowledge could direct them as they defend their developing practice with theory. Some mention that they wish they could rewrite the theoretical section to incorporate their classroom experience.

Several factors are at play related to the writing assignment discussed. The point made by the students, and my own concern about the positive issue of having a field experience incorporated into the methods course, coupled with the disadvantage of its placement at the end of the term, thus eliminating time for guided reflection caused me to rethink the writing assignment.

In her book, *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers,*[2] Erika Lindemann offers some guidelines for designing writing assignments, and I decided to use those to direct my assignment evaluation. First, she says writing students should practice adjusting relationships among writer, reader, and subject while manipulating more and more complex variables. Reader, writer, and subject were not in question in this assignment, but I realized my goal was to present a real-world, professional writing experience. Unfortunately, this was happening without allowing the course's built-in strength of classroom teaching to drive the assignment. The students saw this and were aware that their writing would be strengthened if they could write as a more experienced writer, more knowledgeable of their subject that would allow them to write within the context of more complex variables.

Lindemann also says that defining a writing assignment requires knowing students well, anticipating problems, finding words to define the task, and avoiding clutter that might distract. The students and I recognized the clutter, "writing about practice before practicing," but for me to find words to define their writing task ahead of the actual field experience proved problematic at best and became the clutter I needed to avoid. The problem was, however, that I was stuck in the rut of "we've always done it this way," which included being in class for eleven weeks, out in the field the last four, and all course work completed before the fieldwork started.

The third directive Lindemann gives in her discussion of writing assignments says that we must decide the writing assignment's function as a teaching tool, assess its relation to other assignments, and plan instruction, class discussions and group work, to support the assignment. One thing I emphasize in the methods course is that students think outside the box when considering ways to approach instruction. As I applied this principle to my own teaching, I saw a way to incorporate my students' voices into the writing assignment attached to the unit plan. I realized that I could offer students a way to manipulate more complex variables while offering them a chance to write from a developing voice if they wrote the theory section after their field experience. Not hard to see in retrospect, but without having been through the writing assignment with the students, I missed the point when designing coursework deadlines that meshed realistically with the demanding requirements of the field experience.

As I pondered Lindemann's third point-the assignment's function as a teaching tool and its relation to other assignments-I realized that I needed to change not only the writing assignment, but also the timeframe for the field experience. With that in mind, when planning for the fall term, I moved the field experience up a week, so that students completed their four-week teaching, and then they returned to the college classroom the last week of the term. The students wrote the unit plan component prior to the field experience, but bringing them back on campus offered the time needed to reflect on what worked and what didn't as they experienced the classroom. The redesign allowed the students to consider their book knowledge about teaching in relation to their real-world experience with teaching, and in doing so, that blended knowledge became the beginning point for informed professional writing about the theory that supported a developing pedagogical stance in the teaching of English at the secondary level.

Breaking the Bonds of Academic Genres
Susan M. Hunter

My story of writing-assignment making involves students enrolled in a master's program in professional writing where "professional writing" encompasses creative writing, composition and rhetoric, and applied writing of the business and journalistic type. Before I discuss the challenge of seeing writing assignments through the eyes of this master's-level students, I need to provide you with a profile of them. Many are practicing professional writers, employed as technical editors or public relations workers; some are writing

teachers; some have non-writing-related careers. Ranging in age from 23 to 55, most are returning to the university classroom after some years in the workplace or raising families; eighty percent are women. Many do not have undergraduate degrees in English. Their professional and personal motives for pursuing a master's degree in professional writing are varied. Since their personal motives differ widely, I'll generalize about why they undertake this master's program based on their largely pragmatic professional motives. The majority will not choose to pursue a doctorate. Those who want to move up in their current workplace take applied writing courses such as Web-based corporate visual communication or computers and communication; those who want to publish literary fiction and nonfiction take creative writing workshops; secondary teachers who want to increase their expertise and raise their salary take courses in composition and rhetoric to learn more about the theory and practice of teaching writing. All have somewhere along the line been told they have a "flair" for writing.

Imagine, then, the heterogeneous group through whose eyes I must continually re-see the writing projects I assign in the core class, "Issues and Research Methods in Professional Writing." In this course, students take risks with unfamiliar genres for which they receive some open-ended guidelines about genre, topic choice, and rhetorical context. But they have few models for these genres from past writing and reading experiences, and I do not supply sample papers from previous courses. They keep a writer's notebook of responses to course readings; they interview a professional writer and present the results in question-and-answer form or as a profile; they team up to write collaboratively a comparative analysis of how data from these interviews confirms or challenges ideas from course readings; they present a book review orally and in writing; they write a critique of a source they have consulted as part of a literature review for a research proposal; they compile a portfolio of journal entries and revised writing prefaced by a cover letter that reflects on and connects the selections. Journal, interview, comparative analysis, book review, critique, research proposal, portfolio-returning students initially feel intimidated by these academic genres in a graduate program where they expected to get hands-on practice until they realize that these genres can transcend the academy to serve popular, commercial, and workplace discourse communities as well.

In the workshop talk that facilitates this writing, students reconceive genres as they learn them. Individually and collectively, they re-make genres as their own, resisting acculturation into an academic community, even as they become members of the discourse community of the course and the graduate program. These writers do bring to the course a tacit knowledge of the genres specified in the assignments. As we talk about work-in-progress, you can hear them dredging up memories of critiques and proposals from past academic experiences, searching for some familiar benchmark. The genre that I designate for each writing assignment becomes a useful starting point for "unpacking" rhetorical purpose. Although they still clamor for models, without them, these writers are given-and then give themselves-permission to extend the boundaries of the assignment guidelines purposefully for their own rhetorical reasons. For example, a student presented an oral book review, not by summarizing and evaluating the book as had been done in book reviews she'd read in the past or heard presented in class. Instead, exclaiming at the start, " This is the only way I can think to do this," she related her personal reactions to selected parts of the book to give a history of *her* reading, turning a book review into a literacy narrative. After reading about interviewing as a research technique, another student asked the journalist she interviewed exclusively about his interviewing strategies. She explained that she had become so engrossed in discussing this topic with the journalist that she had completely forgotten to consult the guidelines for the interview project that specified questions about the professional writer's composing process. For the collaborative assignment, one team of writers rejected an analytical approach choosing instead to compose a symposium that enacted a conversation on collaboration among the professional writers they had interviewed and the scholars they had read. In these three cases, rhetorical exigency and personal interest motivated writers to cast aside the constraints of genre or guidelines. The discourse community of the classroom allowed them to invent genres, choose alternatives, and ignore restrictions. In my role as writing-assignment maker, I have learned to be continually surprised by and open to such reinventions.

The research proposal offers a different set of rhetorical challenges for these practicing and emerging professional writers. Their histories as writers include the production of numerous library research papers. Few if any, however, have experience proposing a plan to do qualitative research involving human participants on a cutting-edge topic or existing problem in a professional field or workplace that cannot be completed in a short period of time. Students struggle to come to terms with the range and limits of a genre in which they propose but will not complete research. While a genre that requires them to plan and begin research but not to finish it-a proposal-is widely recognized in the academy and the workplace, it is a strategy alien to students entering

a master's program. To make the strange seem familiar, I encourage students to select topics that reflect their individual workplace interests or career goals so that they can perceive the intersection of workplace and academic literacies. And so, one aspiring technical writer proposes to reinvent the genre of user manuals. A commercial fiction writer proposes investigating the effects editorial feedback and critique groups have on publishing creative writers. Another aspiring writer questions whether graduate writing programs turn students into publishing professionals. An aspiring poet and fiction writer turns her proposal into a book prospectus. Out of their personal and professional interests, these writers pose questions that drive their inquiries; the generic constraints of "proposal" fade into the background.

In peer review workshops, the writers discuss conventions and deviations in their works-in-progress and justify to one another their rhetorical choices. They wonder at the variety of their documents and at the fact that in this discourse community "different is okay." Certainly, in the future they will have to function in workplaces where the tension between individual vision and community expectations makes "different" riskier. But I believe that from my writing classroom community they will take away the experience of genre as a social construct that is negotiable and responsive and that they will continually reenact that understanding with other writers in other settings or discourse communities.

In the four years since the master's in professional writing began at Kennesaw State, I have taught the introductory "Issues and Research Methods" course seven times. Initially, students viewed the readings and writing assignments as too "academic" in light of their practical expectations. Perhaps that first cohort's perception was more helpful feedback than I considered it at the time it was given. It may have spurred me to enact negotiable, collaborative assignment shaping in subsequent classroom communities, so that I now continually re-view writing assignments through my graduate students' eyes.

Constructivist Strategies in Higher Education

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Constructivism is alternately called a philosophy, an epistemology, a teaching strategy, a learning strategy, a perspective, a belief system, a fraud and a fad. It is based on the fundamental assumption that people create knowledge from the interaction between their existing knowledge or beliefs and the new ideas or situations they encounter (Airasian & Walsh, 1997).[1] Because of the emphasis on the interaction between "old" knowledge and "new" knowledge, instructors who subscribe to constructivism strongly support creating environments in which students are encouraged to actively engage both types of knowledge.

At the 1999 Conference on College and University Teaching held at Kennesaw State University a group of college professors were invited to hear about and sample higher education teaching and learning strategies designed with constructivism in mind. The session began with a constructivist strategy, that is, the audience was asked to combine new knowledge in the form of distributed article abstracts with their prior knowledge of the perspective to identify the defining characteristics of constructivism. This exercise led to the realization that the definitions and understanding among the group were, understandably, not the same. In order to begin "on the same page," I continued the session with a set of statements quoted from *Learning With Technology: A Constructivist Perspective* by David H. Jonassen, Kyle L. Peck & Brent G. Wilson (1999).[2] While not definitive for all, the following statements did provide a basis and a background for the session.

According to Jonassen, Peck and Wilson (1999):

- Knowledge construction results from activity, so knowledge is embedded in activity.
- Knowledge is anchored in and indexed by the context in which the learning activity occurs.
- Meaning is in the mind of the knower. Therefore, there are multiple perspectives on the world.
- Meaning making is prompted by a problem, question, confusion, disagreement, or dissonance (a need or desire to know) and so involves personal ownership of that problem.
- Knowledge-building requires articulation, expression, or representation of what is learned (meaning that is constructed).
- Meaning may also be shared with others, so meaning making can also result from conversation.
- Meaning making and thinking are distributed throughout our tools, culture, and community.
- Not all meaning is created equally (some is more viable due to the richer and more varied experience).

Having established the ground rules for thinking about constructivism during this session, I described and demonstrated three strategies regularly used in my classes at Valdosta State University. I teach mostly graduate level Instructional Technology classes including courses in theory, research, instructional design, needs assessment and evaluation.

The Strategies

The first of the strategies is a group technique called LEGwork (for Learning Environment Group). I coined this term to describe a general teaching strategy I use in several classes. A LEGwork project is one in which groups apply a process (e.g., instructional design, needs assessment) to a large scale problem that continues throughout the term. The LEGwork (done mostly in class) is parallel to an individual project the students are doing outside class. This strategy allows students to immediately apply course concepts and skills to a concrete problem within the supportive environment of the group. It has been shown to be very effective in reducing uncertainty and anxiety in individuals faced with large complex individual projects and in providing a structured opportunity to develop and practice the all-important skills of teamwork and collaboration.

The second strategy is called My Page. I tell the students, "No, we're not on the same page and we shouldn't be." That statement is a real surprise to students who have been trained to think that answers are right OR wrong. At various times, during a class, frequently throughout the term, students are presented with a question or task. They are to write the question at the top of a page and construct a response using the rest of the page. This response is based on information gained within the course resources, but requires application of the concepts to the student's own life and experience. Some pages are written in class; some are assignments for the next class period.

Feedback is given in a variety of ways. For some My Pages, the instructor constructs a response out of her own experience, offers it to the students as an example, and asks them to rank the instructor response, a peer response and their own response on a scale such as "home run", "in the ballpark," and "out in left field." The teaching strategy focuses on reinforcing the concepts through personal self-selected examples and

refining the understanding of the concepts through multiple perspectives. Students are encouraged to annotate their pages with ideas gained from the instructor, peers or self-assessment during class discussion. Students have reported a great deal of satisfaction from using this technique in guiding their reading of resource material and building an annotated record (grounded in their own experience) of important concepts throughout the course.

The third strategy began as an assessment strategy and became, in addition, a learning strategy. *EeeekSams are* exams, and they *aren't*. Most of the courses in our Instructional Technology graduate program are project-oriented, rather than exam-oriented. That may be why the *EeeekSams* I give attract so much attention (and anxiety) from the students. *EeeekSams* take the philosophy of My Pages, "kick it up a notch" and use it for a more formal assessment purpose. Prior to the assessment students are given a description of a general role, e.g., "You are an instructional technology professional responsible for designing, developing, managing and evaluating training which will support productive and routine technology use by adult employees." The students must, from there, elaborate on who they are, where they work, who they teach, what the employees do, etc.

"This assignment required me to create a hypothetical organization which would be used as the basis for the exam's 25 questions. I created TIME OUT, a time management training company. Using my chosen organization, the exam asked me to produce real life scenarios that would apply the concepts..."

Once their persona is fully fleshed out, they are given an *EeeekSam* which requires extensive in-depth application of concepts, procedures and models from text or other resource material. Every question must be answered from within the persona; full access to resources (including other students) is allowed and encouraged, but no "shared personas" are allowed.

"This was a very thought provoking assignment. Our group met on several occasions to discuss what type of answer was needed for each question. We found that each of us has a rather difference experience base from which to draw ideas...When I was alone working at home, I found that our collaborative discussions had definitely been worth the effort of setting up."

Students are asked to make two copies of their responses, one to hand in and one to annotate. During a class period, the instructor shares her "persona" and reviews *EeeekSam* responses from that point of view. As in *My Pages*, students are encouraged to annotate their copy for eventual revision and re-submission. Included with the re-submission is a page of reflection on the process of doing the *EeeekSam*, including the class discussion, peer review and self-assessment activities. Students have been very positive about this form of assessment, reporting a deep and full understanding of the concepts. They were not shy, however, about reflecting upon and sharing the difficulties they experienced.

> "I decided to include this artifact in my portfolio because, without doubt, this activity caused me more stress than anything has in a long time. Catering a reception for 500 is a walk in the park by comparison. I had thought that a take-home exam would be a snap. Others I have had were."
>
> "I could not make the transfers from the text to the scenario. I had a hard time even putting myself into the role...after all, I am supposed to be the learner here."
>
> "These exams proved to be a very difficult task. I spent 15 hours on the first exam and 7 hours on the second exam. I thought that this would be easy because I am so involved in providing training for my faculty, but I guess I didn't ever think of underlying theory..."

There is still a range of achievement in the work, allowing for discrimination among levels of mastery of concepts, coherence of viewpoint and student effort. Students say they learn from these *EeeekSams*, a unique testing experience for most of them.

> "The most interesting part of the exam was that it provided the opportunity for positive speculation about future opportunities. I've never taken a test before that I wanted to keep and re-read for future reference."

A review of the constructivist statements outlined in the beginning of this article reveals that the three strategies, *LEGwork*, *My Page* and *EeeekSams*, are consistent with the constructivist philosophy. They work by embedding knowledge in activity and making the context in which the learning activity occurs a part of the learning itself. These strategies require students to take personal ownership of the knowledge and to express or represent that knowledge in a number of ways. Meaning is made while these strategies are employed in the conversation of groups, and that meaning is compared, contrasted and refined by comparison with expert and peer models.

Re-membering Ourselves as Teacher-Scholars on the way to Parnassus

Jan Hoffmann, Associate Professor of Speech Communication,
Macon State College

I am twenty years a college teacher now (at true mid-life in my career), and am mostly comfortable in my teaching skin. I have taught hundreds of Speech Communication courses to thousands of students at a variety of colleges and universities across the country. I have learned much about teaching and learning my discipline in that time, and on good days I feel that strong sense of personal identity and integrity that Parker Palmer identifies as the shared trait of all good teachers in his marvelous book, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*.[1] I've also noticed some disturbing effects of reaching the mid-life of my teaching career, and those include a tendency toward frozen complacency, helpless cynicism and, most troubling of all, a growing sense of disconnection and distance between myself, my subject and my students. I catch myself teaching a course (particularly a fundamentals course) the same way year after year because I'm comfortable with it, even though in my heart I know there is room for improvement. I catch myself participating in too many "pity parties" with my colleagues, in which we wallow in our victimhood of lack of support from the heartless administration, lack of pay compared to our colleagues in the private sector, lack of appreciation from our students, and lack of good students in general. I catch myself experiencing a widening distance from my students with each passing year, making it easier to forget one of the most fundamental principles of good teaching I ever learned; the best teachers are those who remember what it's like to be a student, and craft their curricula accordingly.

I believe that confronting and combating frozen complacency, cynicism, and disconnection is some of the most important work we undertake in the dangerous middle age of our careers. Parker Palmer's wise counsel is a wonderful resource for undertaking that work. He reminds us to revisit the two convergences that called us toward teaching in the first place; the mentors who evoked us and the subject that chose us.

Like many teachers, over the years I have collected inspirational quotes and passages about teaching and learning. On any given day, as I sit in front of my computer screen, trying to generate lesson plans and activities that will spark both my students and myself with renewed or new found excitement and insights, I'll pick one out to read, and take a few minutes to reflect on the lesson it has to offer me, for this is a crucial time to re/member myself to my vocation.

One of the inspirational passages I turn to most often is attributed to John Steinbeck, purportedly from a journal he kept while he was writing *The Grapes of Wrath*. In it, he recalls the experience he had some twenty years earlier in Miss Hawkins' high school economics class in Salinas, California:

> She aroused us to shouting, bookwaving discussions. . .Our speculation ranged the world. She breathed curiosity into us so that we brought in facts or truths shielded in our hands like captured butterflies. . .She left a passion in us for the pure knowable world and she inflamed me with a curiosity which has never left me...She left her signature on us, the literature of the teacher who writes on minds. I have had many teachers who told me soon forgotten facts, but only three who created in me a new thing, a new attitude, and a new hunger. I suppose that to a large extent, I am the unsigned manuscript of that high school teacher. What deathless power lies in the hands of such a person.[2]

Indeed. That's the kind of teacher to dream of being someday, a kind of academic super-hero, and though I'm sure in reality Miss Hawkins had her share of "teaching days from Hell" and may not have had that profound an impact on all the students who passed through her economics class, Steinbeck's encomium to her stands as the quintessential evocation of the teacher I want to be. Twenty years ago, when I walked into the classroom for the first time as "Teacher," it was with more of a sense of impending death and powerlessness, than any sense of deathless power.

Another of my favorite passages comes from an essay Jay McInerney wrote in the *New York Times Book Review* on the passing of his mentor/teacher, noted author Raymond Carver:

> Never insisting, rarely asserting, he was an unlikely teacher...The recurring image I associate with Raymond Carver is one of people leaning toward him, working very hard at the act of listening. He mumbled, and if it once seemed

> merely like a physical tick, I now think it was the function of a deep humility and a respect for the language bordering on awe, a reflection of his sense that words should be handled very, very gingerly. As if it might be almost impossible to say what you wanted to say. As is if it might be dangerous even the idea of facing a class made him nervous every time...He preferred listening to lecturing...He dealt in specifics, stayed close to the texts, and eventually there would come a moment when the nervousness would lift off of him as he spoke about writing that moved him...He did not consider it his job to discourage anyone. He said that there was enough discouragement out there for anyone trying against all odds to be writer...His harshest critical formula was: "I think it's good you got that story behind you." Meaning, I guess that one has to drive through some ugly country on the way to Parnassus.[3]

McInerney's loving recollection of Carver inspires me in part because I, too, feel that nervous agitation on class day. His deep love and respect for the power of language resonates with me as a rhetorician in whose insufficient hands is held the awesome task of passing on the legacy of the masters who handed down the language to me. Carver reminds me that humility and awe are the only appropriate attitudes to take toward my subject. The course I love to teach the most is Introduction to Public Speaking, a requirement for all students at my university, and one which each and every student dreads, even more than the required math courses. Carver's philosophy of gentle critique of students' beginning creative writing efforts mirrors my approach to critiquing beginning student speakers. They need all the nurturing I can give in the face of the terror and vulnerability they experience each time they stand in front of the class to try to give articulate voice to their deepest convictions.

By periodically revisiting these, and other student tributes to great teachers, I experience a much needed renewal, a recommitment to my vocation, a reconnection to my love of subject and students which energizes my efforts to combat the dangers of mid-career malaise. There are of course, additional renewing activities crucial for me now, including initiating more dialogues with my colleagues at school about the substantive teaching/learning successes and failures we encounter separately and together. One of my fondest memories of being a graduate student teaching assistant is of the support and counsel we gave each other in passionate conversations about teaching, which I need now just as much or more as I needed it then. I also have to find ways to interact move with students outside the confines of the classroom, to better connect with them as whole persons, to lessen the intellectual and emotional distance between us.

I believe that all of these activities are crucial for those of us negotiating the tricky country of mid-career. As Palmer puts it, we need to reclaim our hearts by remembering ourselves and our power. *Re*-membering involves putting ourselves back together, recovering our identity and integrity as teacher-scholars, and reclaiming the wholeness of our lives.

Enhanced Student Learning Through Collaboration Between Learning Support and the Classroom Teacher

Mary Nielson, Distinguished Professor of English and Reading and
Emily Pestana, Assistant Professor of English,
East Georgia College

During the Fall Semester 1998, East Georgia College opened a Learning Support Center designed to provide academic assistance, especially for students who were enrolled in writing, mathematics, and reading classes. Because the Learning Support Center was a new endeavor, the instructors at the center and some of the instructors from the English Department wanted to find ways to encourage students to use the services that the Center would provide. Many of East Georgia's students are first-generation college students, and the idea of seeking tutorial assistance is an uncomfortable or unfamiliar one at best.

In an effort to improve student learning in composition classes and to promote student use, Dr. Pestana, of the English Department, and Dr. Nielsen, of the Learning Support Center, decided to work together in establishing an open line of communication between the center and the classroom. All too often, learning support labs function in isolation of the classroom teacher. Seldom do students seek help voluntarily; they are more likely sent for help. However, in most cases, after the student receives help, the instructor does not receive specific and regular feedback from the college's learning center concerning what took place during the tutorial sessions.

In their collaborative working relationship, Dr. Pestana strongly encouraged student use of the services at the center by providing positive incentives for doing so. One particularly effective incentive was the addition of extra points to an essay score if the student did supplemental exercises that focused on errors made in the student's essay. This incentive was open to all students in her Developmental English and Composition I classes and had the positive effect of motivating even the better students to improve their skills and their scores. In return, the staff at the center provided weekly feedback to the professor concerning the types of problems for which students sought help. Thus, a positive, reciprocal relationship was established to the benefit of students, the Learning Support Center, and the classroom teacher.

In this on-going environment of communication, Dr. Pestana would identify types of errors that students were making on tests and essays. The student, then, would bring to the center the graded test or essay with specific errors identified-such as subject/verb agreement, choppy sentence structure, and weak development. Dr. Nielsen would create or find appropriate exercises to remedy the specified errors, and students would complete these exercises at the center. In addition, Dr. Nielsen and the student tutors would identify common problems that they saw in rough drafts that Dr. Pestana's students would bring to the Learning Support Center. For instance, many students in the Developmental English classes had difficulty with essay structure and paragraph unity. Dr. Nielsen would then discuss these emerging student problems with Dr. Pestana, who would, in turn, reemphasize or reteach the concepts in her classes. Throughout the semester, Dr. Nielsen and Dr. Pestana engaged in discussions of student learning, isolating and targeting areas for instruction and remediation. In short, students benefited from mutual reinforcement of composition and grammar instruction in both the classroom and the center.

Assessment

At the end of the Fall Semester, Dr. Nielsen and Dr. Pestana examined a number of variables to determine student success. These included CPE pass rates for her two Developmental English classes, successful course completion for her Composition I classes, and student perceptions of the usefulness of the Learning Support Center's services.

Results of the assessment were very encouraging for all of Dr. Pestana's classes. In her two Developmental English classes, 83 to 88% of the students successfully passed the English portion of the CPE, and in her Composition I classes, all students who sought assistance more than twice during the 16-week semester successfully passed.

In addition, student perceptions of Learning Support Center services were favorable as well. All 50 students who received help for English throughout the semester were asked to complete an assessment of services provided by the center. Surveys were completed and returned by 45 students for a 90% completion rate. All students agreed that the English tutors and staff were helpful to them, and all 30 students who completed grammar exercises at the center found these exercises to be helpful to their understanding of English usage. Students were also very positive about the clarity of explanations offered by tutors and staff, with over 95% of the students responding that the quality of explanations was good to very good.

Benefits of Collaborative Instruction

A number of benefits emerged from this collaborative arrangement. Staff at the Learning

Support Center benefited from Dr. Pestana's feedback by receiving guidance in the preparation of lab materials specifically designed to meet the needs of these particular students. Dr. Pestana's encouragement of students to use the services helped ensure the success of the Learning Support Center in its opening semester. Students benefited through the identification of problems and misunderstandings before the instructor graded their essays, and they benefited by completing exercises that focused on their own particular weaknesses. Moreover, the instructor benefited by receiving on-going, constructive feedback on students' weaknesses and misunderstandings, enabling her to take corrective action the classroom and thus decreasing the chance of student failure. One additional benefit to this collaborative effort was the reduction in time spent grading revised essays. While having students revise their essays is important, the advent of the student failure. One additional benefit to this collaborative effort was the reduction in time spent in semester system has made continuous revision unmanageable for instructors who face the real possibility of teaching five composition courses each term. Substituting guided and focused practice at the Learning Support Center-in place of simply revising corrected essays for the instructor to read again-made the instructor's workload a little more manageable without compromising student instruction. This collaborative undertaking reinforces the obvious-but often unpracticed-idea that student learning can be enhanced when everyone works together.

Teaching Through Reaching: Service Learning at Kennesaw State University

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An ancient Chinese proverb states, *"What I hear, I forget; what I see, I remember; what I do I understand."*

University professors have long understood the value of experience in learning and have used varied techniques in teaching to enhance understanding. Traditionally, experiential learning comes in many forms, including internships, co-ops, consulting, and various group work situations, generally in the for-profit sector. Service Learning is a new form of experiential learning which is sweeping the country and which operates exclusively in the not-for-profit realm.

Service Learning connects theory with practice and is often cited as "linking learning to life." It uses meaningful and thoughtfully organized experience to reinforce the academic objectives of the course. Service Learning involves higher-level activities such as analysis, decision-making, and problem solving. It is not volunteerism, though that too can have important benefit to college students, Rather, it builds academic knowledge and skills, including leadership skills, while meeting community needs and/or promoting the public. Service Learning builds connections between students, their communities, and the world outside the classroom. It enhances citizenship and encourages ethics development. It bolsters communities; it also builds resumes. Everyone wins.

Service Learning can be implemented in as many ways are there are college courses. It is limited only be the amount of imagination invested into the design of a class; community needs are everywhere. History, Literature, Chemistry, and Theater courses all can use Service Learning. While Nursing, Sociology, and Management might have obvious applications for Service Learning, Music, Physical Education, and Art can also have academic objectives reinforced through community projects. The American Association for Higher Education has published a series of volumes on Service Learning in the disciplines. Ten volumes are currently available with eight more scheduled for publication in the near future.

Kennesaw State University has a long-standing commitment to public service, addressing the needs and improving the quality of life in the community. This commitment coupled with the central institutional priorities of effective teaching and learning make Service Learning at KSU a natural "marriage." Kennesaw State University is embracing this innovative approach to teaching through a new group called the Alliance for Community Engagement. Its members, comprised of dedicated faculty coupled with faculty mentors seasoned in Service Learning, have embarked upon a journey of professional development and servant leadership. Faculty report freshness in their classes as students mesh together new projects and theories.

The proposed projects are exciting and varied. As an example, a junior level history class will carefully develop a series of questions about the Great Depression and World War II. These questions will be used to gather oral histories from people living in Assisted Living Communities, who often have few interested listeners. Then this information will be compared and contrasted to books and movies about the era.

A senior communications class studying the uses and effects of Mass Media will take their lessons to the streets, teaching groups of pre-teens, ages 6-12, about the tricks of advertisers and the illusion of special effects. This pre-teen group is especially vulnerable to deceptive media and alluring messages.

A senior retailing class will complete a merchandising analysis for not-for-profit thrift shops. Students will study inventory control, pricing, displays, layout and design. The students learn through hands-on experience; the thrift stores gain some good insights; and the community wins.

The long-term plan at Kennesaw State University expands these Service Learning experiences, weaving them through the university adventure. Both a volunteering opportunity at the Freshman level and a discipline specific Senior Seminar culminating the major coursework will be added. These two bookend courses, along with other courses that integrate Service Learning, will give our students a rich education. As a result of their service activities, students should have developed commitment to community engagement. For if the ancient Chinese saga was correct, *"the doing"* will lead to *"the understanding."*

Using a Challenge and Choice Method

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Regardless of the number of students enrolled in a course, teaching basic social science should be challenging and exciting for both students and instructors. To meet this standard, I incorporate diverse methods of motivating students to employ high standards to achieve academic excellence. Whether the classes I teach are composed of thirty-five students or ninety students, I insist on challenging them, not only with regard to the American political process, but also with regard to their ideals about the manner in which government should operated. For example, after my lecture on American ideals, constitutional government and federalism, I challenge students in my American government courses to create a political system to govern them if they were stranded on an island with no chance of being rescued. Students may adopt the principles that the Founding Fathers employed when writing and ratifying the U.S. Constitution, or they may deviate from representative democracy.

Additionally, and most importantly, students are informed that my courses are structured according to "choice." I assume that each student in my course is enrolled not only to pass the course but to increase his/her knowledge base, although many take American government as a core requirement. In order to achieve these goals, students are faced with numerous choices in terms of studying and attending class, staying alert and being prepared to participate. Some students have to weigh the option of over-participating in non-academic activities versus preparing themselves for academic assignments. Nevertheless, I inform them at the start of the semester and reiterated throughout the semester, in order to make prudent choices in "real life," one must first think, weigh alternative options, and consider the consequences of the decisions that one makes and/or does not make. By making choices, one learns how to think and function independently. With such a philosophical framework guiding the thought processes of students, they should encounter few major problems comprehending the study and significance of American government and/or politics.

Inductively and within a political science context, once they have grasped the manner in which they themselves make decisions based upon circumstances and examination of possible outcomes, students should be able to develop a better grasp of how theories of early Greek philosophy influenced the Founding Fathers' thinking and creation of the American Constitution. This thought process should also make it easier for students to understand the significance of checks and balances, federalism, judicial review, the Virginia Plan versus the New Jersey Plan, a one-person executive, the electoral college, and the U.S. emphasis on economic interdependence with Japan. Clearly, this process encourages students to learn about American politics as scholars conceptualize it and also to take into account the choices that politicians face when making decisions.

Because one of the most fundamental methods of learning is conducting research, students also have an opportunity to write and present "short" research papers about controversial political issues: in the "real" world, it is controversy that draws mass attention to politics. Moreover, this assignment is not divorced from making sound choices. Students are encouraged not only to choose topics of interest to them, but also to formulate a thesis statement via empirical research and to reach and state conclusions based upon that research. They are also required to state the implications of the conclusions that they reach. This process allows them to learn the technical aspects of writing college papers and also provides the opportunity for them to express their viewpoints regarding "real life" issues from a critical but factual standpoint. This process is implemented to ensure that students acquire a basic understanding of how to write college positions papers and develop critical thinking skills. As an extra credit assignment for larger classes, they have the opportunity to present their research in class. The advantage of assigning research papers to students in large classes is that quite a few write and present on the same topics but with different perspectives. It is exciting during presentations when students challenge each other in reference to the virtues and/or vices of public policy from an intellectual viewpoint. With papers in hand, students not only learn from one another, but also discover the unanticipated consequences that public policy allows.

Who said that taking and teaching a social science course at the introductory level had to be dull? Instead of waiting until students enroll in upper-level courses, instructors should challenge them to think, research, and write at the introductory level. Students should also become acquainted with systematic consideration of alternatives when making policy or sound decisions. My students normally research, write, and present papers about affirmative action, abortion, gun control, school safety, global warming, the constitutional basis of patients' rights versus the rights of health maintenance organizations, etc., but in doing so, they are also strengthening their cognitive, analytical, organizational, research, writing, and on-line skills, that is, skills that we use throughout life. In essence, students are being challenged to pass my courses, but also to become thoughtful adults.

One Hundred-Eighty Degrees in the Opposite Direction: Turning Students' Lives Around and Increasing Retention

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To help students learn or improve their academic careers, Georgia Perimeter College offers a HEDS (Higher Education Seminar) course. Dr. Cary Christian, who has taught this course and others similar to it for the past seven years, recently decided to look up her students' GPAs. What she found was disturbing, for most of her students had low grade point averages. This discovery spurred her to investigate the number of students at the college who were in academic difficulty. On the Dunwoody campus of GPC, she found approximately a thousand students on warning, probation, or exclusion each year.

With this figure in mind, Dr. Christian realized that many of these students are not incapable of doing the work; they simply lack the skills and motivation to succeed in college. Knowing that these students' lives could be turned around so that they are better equipped to complete college and knowing that retention would increase as a result, Dr. Christian submitted a proposal for a HEDS-TA (Turn Around) course, which would focus on study skills, motivation, and locus of control. She suggested that students who completed the class with an A or B could remain at the college as long as they maintained a C average. After the administration approved the proposal, the next step was to select the students to take the course.

All "at risk" students on campus received a letter inviting them to participate in the program. If they were interested, they were asked to submit a written application, state on the application what they thought caused their academic difficulties and what they were doing to overcome these difficulties, and find a faculty/staff member who was willing to serve as their mentor during the semester. Based on these requirements, Dr. Christian accepted eleven students into the summer class and twelve for the spring course. (She limits the number of students to ten to fifteen). With the acceptance of the students into the program, the course was ready to begin in the summer of 1998.

The classroom part of HEDS-TA was devoted to teaching study skills and college survival. The specific study/survival skills included but were not limited to goal setting, time management, note taking, reading textbooks, memory techniques, test-taking approaches, dealing with test anxiety, using the library/labs, and wellness. For the textbook, we used John Gardner and A. Jerome Jewler's *Your College Experience*.[1]

The students, on the first day, received a detailed syllabus of all assignments and test dates. The assignments included reading and outlining each chapter, journeying, and writing papers. The focus of each chapter was a component that the students needed to master in order to succeed in college. As the term passed, we discovered that the students did not know how best to read a textbook, take notes, or study. By emphasizing these areas, the students left the class better equipped to do well in their classes. However, the main area where the students needed help was motivation. They were all looking for motivation outside of themselves; they couldn't do their work because the teacher didn't like them, didn't explain the material well, or they were not interested in the course. As the class discussed internal and external locus of control, the students began to realize that they were in charge of their own academic careers. They could decide for themselves how well or how poorly they did in their classes. Then, after talking to family members, friends, bosses, and so on, the students learned that motivation had to come from within; if they wanted something badly enough they could force themselves to take the necessary steps (reading assignments, studying, getting tutored) to achieve success in their courses. From this point on in the class, the majority of the students took control of their academic careers, began to do their work, and saw immediate improvement in their attitudes and approach to college.

The course also alerted students to important campus services, in particular, disability assessment and career development. If a student thought that he or she might have a learning disability, he or she then knew whom to talk to and the assistance available. The same was true of career counseling. If a student were unsure of a major or interested in transferring, he or she learned of the services on campus that could provide answers.

As part of the class, students met at least once a week in focus groups conducted by a counselor or someone with group counseling experience. The topics of these focus groups paralleled the class discussions. These meetings helped students to determine the reasons for their underachievement, set realistic goals for the semester and beyond, deal successfully with failure and other setbacks in college, and build self-esteem. In short, the focus group sessions provided students with an opportunity to examine themselves and their academic

careers, as well as address their problems with and their concerns about college. Also, successful students spoke to the HEDS-TA class about the obstacles they had overcome and the steps they had taken to achieve success.

Evaluation of the program is based on two outcomes. One is to see if students meet the goals they set for the semester. The other focuses on whether or not the students pass the course and enroll for the next term. Students, mentors, the counselor, and the instructor each write appraisals of the class, which provide valuable insight into the success or needed changes.

The HEDS-TA course has been offered for two terms thus far, and the results have been encouraging. Out of the eleven students who completed the first term course, eight are still in school and are maintaining a C average or above. All twelve of the second term students passed the class with an A or B and can now continue with their academic careers.

Even though the course has only run two terms, we are excited and encouraged by the results. The "at risk" students often have the abilities to succeed in college; they simply lack the skills or motivation. The HEDS-TA course can provide them with both while raising the college's retention rates. It's a win-win situation for all that are involved.

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International Undergraduate Education: A Collaborative Service Learning Experience in Honduras, Central America

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Nursing international education at the undergraduate and graduate levels has been experienced by only a small number of students. In many instances both professional and personal barriers have prevented students from having a learning experience in a foreign country. One certainty for nursing and nursing education is that nurses of the 21st century will be called upon to deliver population based health care to the international as well as the local community.[1]

In recent years interest in study abroad has increased. American universities are offering students the opportunity to study in many countries throughout the world. Kennesaw State University, through the International Studies Department, has developed a number of international study abroad opportunities for students and faculty in Mexico, Italy and France to name a few.

Typically nursing students and faculty from the United States participate in elective theory and clinical courses abroad. The intent is to expose students to nursing practice, education, health care and the culture of the host country.

There are a number of advantages of using a community health nursing course as a framework for nursing students to study in another culture. The content of a community health course addresses a broad range of topics beyond health, health care and nursing and gives students a framework from which they can focus their learning about the country and the people they are visiting.[2] In addition, community health nursing has been involved in service learning since its inception. The KSU Department of Nursing has a high level of collaboration with many community service organizations and the concept of reciprocal service experiences between service agencies and nursing programs has long been established in nursing education.

Why service learning? A recent article by Brannen et al (1998)[3] indicates that service learning provides a method to combine teaching, learning, service and research while addressing community needs. It provides a means for the faculty mentor to impart to the student values that go beyond curriculum. These values include global and multicultural perspectives, effective communication and interpersonal skills, leadership development and lifelong learning. In order to do this as a community of scholars in the university we must start making connections with the causes and resources that are already aligned with our mission. It is important to reconnect both within our community and through outreach into broader communities, locally, nationally and internationally.

During the summer a junior nursing student was immersed for two months in a service learning project at a mission in Flores, Comayagua, Honduras, a small village in Central America. Honduras, a developing country, is the second poorest in the western hemisphere. The mission covers many acres and includes grade and high schools, separate boarding quarters for the male and female students, four separate boys' and girls' orphanage complexes and a housing project for single mothers with small children. In addition, the mission has trade schools, such as a woodwork shop, at other sites in Honduras.

The faculty member served as the liaison between the student and the mission. It was decided that the student would do a transcultural community assessment with a focus on the health care needs of the mission population. Upon returning to the United States an independent study elective was developed around the international experience.

All preliminary planning between the faculty and student was done during the spring semester. During this time meetings were conducted with representative volunteers who had spent time at the mission as well as with Father Emil Cook, the founder of the mission over 25 years ago who visits the United States every year. The faculty planned to volunteer to work with the student at the mission for one week in Honduras. The preparation for the project enabled the faculty and the student to interact directly and formulate the goals and objectives of the experience. In addition it provided an opportunity for idea exchange, development of a positive rapport between faculty and student and the identification of previous experiences which would help prepare the student for her upcoming time in Honduras.

The learning outcomes of this unique international service learning experience were many:

(1) the two month immersion of the student into the Honduran culture provided her with first hand understanding of the culture, socio-economic issues, geography– climate, as well as life-style and language of the Honduran people;

(2) the experience was recorded by the student in a daily journal. Through

an in depth independent study elective the student analyzed the information gathered and provided recommendations for enhancing the health care of the aggregate population at the mission;

(3) the preparation for the project, the on site collaboration of faculty and student at midpoint, the development of mutual respect between faculty and student, and the ongoing preparation for independent study development added to the success of the international service learning project;

(4) the opportunity provided a highly interactive climate for learning the health needs of the children and mothers, as well as first hand assessment of the health care system and public health needs of the target community;

(5) critical thinking skills were utilized to identify the limitations and lack of available resources, understand the value of time management, and experience leadership and prioritization of theneeds of this international community;

(6) this experience provided the student with time to reflect on her values and personal life experiences, which greatly enriched her professional development and approach to nursing practice.

Diane Walsh, (1999)[4] in a recent article speaks of the challenges that lie behind much of the change agenda taking place throughout higher education including self directed learning, global education and peer collaboration. The faculty of universities play a pivotal role in inventing the future as we conduct our work of teaching, research and service. As educators we have the awesome responsibility to prepare our students for a future we envision and the student in turn will invent that future through their professional practice. This international service learning project in Honduras is one example that not only touches on each of these identified challenges but provides a creative force which will drive lifelong learning, critical thinking and creative problem solving for the global community of the 21st century.

I support Dr. Walsh when she says "that faculty must build the relationships, forge the connections, bind together the pluralistic global learning communities that will provide undergraduates with models to carry throughout their lives, models that inspire lives of purpose and commitment to causes larger than themselves."

Beyond Study Abroad: An Alternative International Experience

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The 1990's have been a decade of increasing globalization and growing interdependence among the nations of the world. Colleges and universities have responded to this phenomenon in a variety of ways, including revamping of the core curriculum, implementation of cross-cultural student and faculty exchanges, and expansion of extracurricular campus programs and activities with an international focus.

One way that colleges of business have approached the challenge of globalization is through requiring students to complete an international course within their major area of study. Marketing majors, for examples, are typically required to take a single course in international marketing involving brief coverage of the topics of culture, geodemographics, and economic and political systems of the world. This is commonly followed by a more intense treatment of how the marketing firm may alter the product, its distribution, promotional strategy, and pricing to accommodate international differences. A course of this type serves to sensitize the business student to the need for thinking globally rather than locally, while at the same time satisfying the international requirements of accrediting agencies.

Exposure of the student to global issues in a traditional classroom setting is undoubtedly beneficial in "expanding the horizons" of the learner. Yet as professors of international business who have taught these courses on a regular basis, we, the authors, have often felt the frustration of trying to impart a global way of thinking within the confines of a U.S. classroom. Using guest speakers with international experience, cross-cultural simulation exercises, and field trips to foreign-owned businesses are all useful means of reinforcing a global message, but these activities are poor substitutes for true, hands-on experience. This is particularly evident when one is teaching students whose international experiences are limited to spring breaks in Cancun. Preparing students to work in an international environment without having them actually *experience* a foreign setting is analogous to teaching someone how to ride a bicycle without ever mounting the bicycle. What our students needed, we concurred, was the opportunity to witness international marketing on a first-hand basis through some kind of international study experience.

The Limitations of Traditional Study Abroad Programs

Generations of American college students have participated in study abroad programs, which typically involve students spending extended periods of time living, and studying abroad. These programs often have a heavy foreign language component, requiring students to take courses taught in the native tongue of the country in which they are living. While the liberal arts have long embraced the study abroad concept, the business disciplines have been slower in becoming involved. Foreign students have come to the United States for years to study American business practices, but U.S. business students have not done likewise.

For our business students here at Kennesaw State University, a number of factors limit study abroad participation, chief of which are work and family responsibilities typical of non-traditional, commuter students. Another limitation is lack of facility in a foreign language. Following semester conversion, business students at our institution have no foreign language requirement which would prepare them for study abroad opportunities. Finally, business students tend to be more pragmatic than exploratory in the way they approach their academic careers, reluctant to embark on anything which might delay graduation and entry into their chosen careers. Yet given the exponential growth of international trade, particularly within the NAFTA partnership, these students have much to gain from a "study abroad" experience tailored to meet their specific needs and addressing obstacles facing the non-traditional business student. Against this backdrop, KSU's Mexico-NAFTA Study Tour was born.

Kennesaw's Mexico-NAFTA Study Tour

To attract the commuter and working students, a business study tour must have several essential features, all of which distinguish it from a traditional study abroad experience. First and foremost, it must demonstrate international business in action. Foreign settings which draw visitors based on their rich cultural heritage or spectacular scenery are not necessarily ideal choices for a business-oriented educational tour. Second, the tour must be short enough in duration that students can be granted work leave and take time away from family responsibilities. Travel distance is another important consideration, since more distant locales involve greater time spent in transit and higher costs which must be passed on to the student. Finally, to be sufficiently compelling to the pragmatist business student, a theme-based study tour is preferable to one lacking a specific focus.

With these essential features in mind, a two-week,

NAFTA-oriented tour of Mexico was developed. As a fellow member of NAFTA and the U.S.' second largest trading partner, Mexico is an increasingly important market for U.S. business. It is important to the economic well being of Georgia as well, given that Mexico purchases millions of dollars worth of goods from the state each year. For these reasons, Mexico is an obvious and logical, though often ignored, choice for today's business student.

Because of its practical focus on NAFTA, our program was offered as a cross-disciplinary one focusing on both the economic and political aspects of NAFTA. Faculty member Michele Zebich-Knos came from International Affairs, while the other two of us came from marketing. Each side brought his/her own expertise to the formula. Students were thus offered the attractive option of earning six semester hours of credit, satisfying some of their business and non-business elective requirements in a concentrated period of time. In preparation for the trip, students spent five intensive weekend afternoons in the spring semester in the classroom, discussing outside readings and listening to faculty lectures and guest speakers from the Atlanta-area Mexican community. By the time our students set foot on Mexican soil, they were somewhat familiar with the business and social cultures of Mexico.

For several reasons, no foreign language experience was required of the course participants. First, for many of those who had not previously studied Spanish, there was insufficient room in their curriculum for both a language course and the six credit hours taken up by our two international study courses. Requiring foreign language instruction prior to the trip would have, therefore, significantly reduced the pool of potential students. In addition, the instructors have learned from past study trips that students experience so many new encounters while traveling in a foreign country that little incremental language learning takes place.

The tour took place in May of 1999, during the three-week gap between spring and summer semesters. Timing of the trip was planned so that students would be able to take summer courses upon their return. The tour consisted of on-site visits to business and factories, as well as to an embassy and consulate, the Mexican-American Chamber of Commerce, and the state of Georgia's own trade center in Mexico City. Since our goal was to promote a better understanding of Mexico and NAFTA, the tour included stays in four cities: Monterrey in the industrial heartland; Guadalajara, the so-called "Silicon Valley" of Mexico; Cuernavaca, home to U.S. retailers such as Sam's and Home Depot; and finally, Mexico City, the ancient and modern-day capital of Mexico. Cultural excursions were included in the trip as well; these consisted of day trips to a number of historical and archaeological sites. Our itinerary thus offered students a good cross-sectional view of Mexican industry, not to mention its culture and regional diversity.

Students stayed in family homes throughout much of the trip, due to cost considerations and the cultural experience which home stays afford. While the students expressed some apprehension about staying in the homes of strangers, especially non-English speaking ones, many felt later that this was one of the most memorable and worthwhile aspects of the trip.

Reflections of the Tour

Leading a group of thirty-eight students through a foreign, non-English speaking country was not always easy. Our students experienced stomach ailments, fatigue, and instances of extreme homesickness. A handful had a difficult time adapting to the food and/or culture. We faculty felt exasperated at times, wondering what we had gotten ourselves into and why. All said and done, however, the good far outweighed the bad, and the experience produced some unforeseen outcomes. The course accomplished its educational objectives, as we expected it would. Equally important, the students forged friendships that did not exist prior to the trip, both with each other and with the Mexicans they encountered along the way. Many discussed planning to return, bringing their spouses or children the next time around. Several students enrolled in Spanish when summer school began, while many more expressed an intention of doing so at the first available opportunity. Some also expressed a newfound interest in an international business career as a result of the trip. Most significantly, thirty-eight people returned to the U.S. with a broadened worldview and a deeper cultural appreciation.

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